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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

27 March 1951

SUBJECT: NIE-27: CHINESE COMMUNIST CAPABILITIES AND INTENTIONS
WITH RESPECT TO TAIWAN (Discussion of Chinese Communist
Capabilities as revised at IAC Representatives Meeting
of 23 March)

DISCUSSION

4. We believe the Chinese Communists, if they decided to make an assault on Taiwan, would be most likely to attack in the spring or summer, when weather and sea conditions are most favorable (see Tab A).

CHINESE COMMUNIST CAPABILITIES FOR AN ASSAULT ON TAIWAN

5. The military capabilities of the Chinese Communist regime stem almost entirely from the strength of its ground combat forces (field forces), which at present number about two million men. These forces are at present committed roughly as follows:

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- (a) An undetermined but certainly large number of field force and militia troops are engaged in containing dissidents and bandits on the mainland estimated to number 600,000.
- (b) At present the Chinese Communists have approximately 290,000 field force troops engaged in the Korean theater of operations and are maintaining a force of 370,000 field force troops in reserve in Manchuria.
- (c) The Chinese Communists have approximately 290,000 troops deployed in the South China area within 250 miles of the Indochina border.
- (d) Approximately 385,000 field force troops are reportedly deployed along the invasion coast from Shanghai to Canton.

6. We estimate that the forces presently deployed along the invasion coast would be adequate to launch a limited surprise attack against Taiwan. We believe, however, that a large-scale invasion of Taiwan in 1951 would require a major shift of Chinese Communist forces from other parts of China to maintain the security

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of southeast China while the invasion is in process. We believe it unlikely that the Chinese Communists could make such additional troops available without adversely affecting their commitments elsewhere, as noted above. Such a deployment, if undertaken, would probably require 90 days to complete.

7. The Chinese Communist Air Force (CCAF) probably contains at least 1,200 active pilots and possibly 3,000 pilots in training. The CCAF is estimated to have available to it approximately 650 aircraft of jet and piston fighters, ground attack, light bomber, and transport types, of which at least 250 are believed to be under direct Soviet control. Soviet-type jet aircraft have been reported in both the Shanghai and Canton areas. The Chinese Communists have sufficient useable airfields within effective fighter and light bomber range of Taiwan. However, since most CCAF aircraft are located in Manchuria and elsewhere in Northeast China, a major redeployment of aircraft would be required before the Chinese Communists could make a maximum offensive air effort in the Taiwan area. Moreover, in the absence of Soviet logistic support on a large scale, losses due to combat attrition and maintenance difficulties would substantially reduce the combat effectiveness of the CCAF within a week of sustained operations.

[NOTE: AF to prepare material on Soviet transport aircraft that might be made available to the Chinese Communists.]

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8. The Chinese Communist Navy, small and untested, comprises about 80 vessels, the largest being a patrol-frigate type. Although there are reports that the navy may have received some submarines from the USSR, it is doubtful that there are Chinese crews capable of manning them.

9. In the event that a major amphibious assault were attempted, it probably would require the use of all the sea-going troop-lift capacity the Chinese Communists can muster.

- (a) By using a heterogeneous assortment of shipping consisting of steamers, motor launches, motorized junks, and a few armed landing craft, the Chinese Communists could probably lift 200,000 troops. However, the troop capacity of conventional craft such as landing craft and coastal steamers, probably is not more than 60,000.
- (b) Chinese Communist airlift capacity is estimated to be sufficient to carry approximately 3,000 troops during an initial 24-hour period. [NOTE: AF to supply data on possible available Soviet transport airlift.] According to recent reports, the Chinese

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Communists are training troops for airborne
operations of which are paratroops. [NOTE: G-2
to furnish data.]

10. The Chinese Communists would face serious logistical difficulties in supporting an assault against Taiwan, particularly if it were to take place while operations in Korea were continuing. Because of the weakness of their internal lines of communication, the Communists would have considerable difficulty in rapidly re-deploying troops and material. Therefore, prior to an invasion attempt, they would be forced to stockpile material and deploy most of the troops required for the entire campaign in the vicinity of the outloading ports to the extent not already accomplished. If there should be sustained resistance on Taiwan, the reinforcement and resupply of the assault forces would require a substantial daily water-lift and it would be essential for the Communists to maintain air and sea supremacy in the Straits during the entire period of fighting.

11. Moreover, it would be difficult for the Chinese Communists to achieve surprise in a large-scale assault, not only because of the necessity of a substantial advance build-up, but also because:

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(a) even if transportation and storage facilities permitted all necessary troops, shipping, and supplies to be assembled in the three port areas adjacent to Taiwan (Swatow, Amoy, and Foochow), such concentrations would be difficult to conceal; (b) in the event that the Communists attempted to coordinate operations from widely separated points along the coast, there would be a 24-48 hour differential between the time of departure of assault forces from more distant ports (such as Shanghai or Canton) and that of forces from Amoy or Foochow. If the large-scale and concentrated build-ups in preparation for embarkation from the three closest ports were detected or if an advance embarkation provided early warning of a major coordinated operation, Communist troop concentrations would be extremely vulnerable to air attack.

12. [NOTE: Department of Defense to furnish paragraph on a CC surprise attack of a limited scope.]

13. The USSR, in addition to giving planning aid, technical advice, and logistic support, could substantially increase Communist China's capabilities in submarine, air, and mine warfare.

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